policy is to promote conventional PCOs which are manned. These are being allotted to educated unemployed persons.

(d) Does not arise in view of part (c) above.

Foreign Financial Support to Militants in Punjab

29. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the extremists and militant groups in Punjab continnue to nurture their links with foreign sources for financial support;

(b) if so, the Government's information or estimate about the extent of foreign funds that has flown into the hands of the militants in Punjab and the strength of the extremist forces and their hide-outs in that State; and

(c) the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) Yes, Sir/ Madam.

(b) The interrogation of Sikh terrorists arrested during 1996 have revealed that the foreign based militants are remitting funds to the militants/sympathisers/harbourers based in India. As per reports, there are 24 hardcore terrorists and 257 non-hardcore terrorists who are still active.

(c) The Government is alert on the activities of the extremists. 83 militants/sympathisers/ harbourers were apprehended by the Security Forces during this year upto October, 96. The police and enforcement authorities are also alert on detecting Hawala transactions in Pubjab. A sum of Rs. 25.34 lakhs relating to illegal Hawala transaction has been recovered in Punjab.

Opening of new Passport Offices in Maharashtra

30. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open new passport offices and collection centres in the State of Maharashtra to ensure speedy issuance of passports to the citizens and also to clear the backlog of pending applications in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) which passport office in the State has largest number of pending applications as on 31st October, 1996, with details; and

(d) the steps being taken to clear the backlog of passport applications in the State?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) It has been decided to open 2 new Passport Offices in the State of Maharashtra at Thane and Pune. This decision has been taken to facilitate expeditious and smooth issue of Passports to the applicants.

(c) and (d) The largest number of pending applications is in Mumbai. As on 01.11.1996, the number of applications pending for over a month was 3925. The pending applications are being cleared through employment of casual labour and by the existing officials working for longer hours.

Multi-crore Scam in NDMC

31. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI O.P. KOHLI:
SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a multi-crore scam involving the tempering of electricity and water bills and misappropriation of payments from consumers amounting to several crores has been detected in New Delhi Municipal Council; and